

The Builder.

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THE first incident that occurred to us when we reached PARIS the other day caused us some annoyance. Every juror for the Great Exhibition, when he accepted his office, signed a solemn declaration to the effect that he would keep secret all the awards made by the juries until these were officially announced by the commissioners. Our astonishment, then, may be guessed when we found men on all the boulevards of Paris selling, for a sou, a list of the French exhibitors to whom great medals had been awarded! According to this paper, fifty-five great medals have been obtained for France; and in it the appropriation of thirty-eight of these, with the names of thirty-one recipients, is given. The publication of this information, it will be seen, implies a breach of faith, not on the part of one juror alone, but of many, and shows the little importance they attached to their deliberate pledge. Their apologists will say, secrecy is constitutionally impossible with Frenchmen: they must talk:—primed with intelligence, they must either burst or "blow." For our own parts we look upon the matter as a breach of faith which deserves the severest reprehension.

Let us turn, however, to a pleasanter theme, and continue our rapid survey of such works and buildings in glittering Paris as came under our notice.

Amongst the most important recent improvements are those in the Palace of the Louvre, the completion of which building, by the way, still affords a subject for essay to a certain number of architects every year. The grand saloon has a new ceiling of great richness, including figures and bas-reliefs, particularly well modelled. In the frieze are the names of painters in panels: the walls are covered with painted canvas, resembling stamped leather. The light from the centre is very excellent. In the Gallery *des sept cheminées* there is also a very elegant new ceiling, with erect female figures, the size of life, in the cove, holding palm branches. This gallery is appropriated to modern French artists, and medallions of the most eminent of them form part of the decoration of the ceiling. M. Duban is the architect to whom France is indebted for these works. The painting, gilding, and cast decorations of the Gallery of Apollo were restored in a singularly short space of time, and M. Duban deserves credit for having placed conspicuously in one of the panels a portrait of Mansard, the architect who designed it. Throughout the Louvre, the ceilings have been made to afford modern artists an opportunity to distinguish themselves. Walking through our miserable whitewashed National Gallery, the contrast is somewhat striking. Even in the British Museum, although colour has been introduced, art is altogether absent. *La Cour de Louvre* has been laid out in paved ways and flower beds, protected by a low, cast-iron enclosure.

The west porch of the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, close to the Louvre, presents a singular specimen of exterior coloured and gilt decorations. The walls are covered with figure-subjects: the vaulting is coloured blue (badly executed), with gold stars and gilt groins. Some modern stained glass in the church is of indifferent character.

Among the few new buildings in progress in this same neighbourhood may be mentioned a new stamp office (*Timbre National*) in the *Rue de la Banque*, and a new *Mairie* close to it. The first, Greco-Italian, so to speak, in style, was designed by M. Baltard: there are sculptured arms in the pediment, and two medallions representing Law and Security. The *Mairie*, where the business of the elections, National Guard, *justice de paix*, &c., is transacted, is the work of M. Girard, architect. It has a turret for clock in centre: the cornice of the entablature is novel and clever. A Gothic church, too, is in progress, and the *Port Neuf* is being lowered.

The Lady Chapel in the Church of St. Gervais, which exhibits some singular depending tracery, with "fretted" ribs, was decorated a short time ago very thoroughly with colours and gilding. Paintings by Delorme fill the wall spaces, and stained glass the windows.

Remembering our own proposed Winter Garden in Hyde-park, we did not fail to look in at the *Jardin d'Hiver*, near the *Rond Point*, in the *Champs Elysées*, and found it somewhat dirty and neglected, especially the vestibule and other adjoining apartments, which contain a number of very bad pictures. The charge for admittance here is one franc (too high): the building appears to be chiefly used for special fêtes. The *Jardin d'Hiver* is too well known to need description now, but we may say that it is of iron and glass, has a canvas awning, and is floored with a concrete in squares. M. Charpentier was the architect. There is a gallery all round the inside, carried, at some distance from the sides, on light pillars which help to support the roof.

At the *Arc de Triomphe*, which is close by here, a scaffold has been erected under one of the side arches to scrape and repair it. This enormous structure when seen from a distance overtops and oppresses all around it.

St. Vincent de Paul, one of the modern churches of Paris, is near the station of the *Chemin de Fer du Nord*, and is approached by three extensive flights of steps. An Ionic portico, of six columns, coloured decorations, stained glass in all the windows, much carving, a hundred and four columns inside, and a parquetté floor are some of the features of this gorgeous temple, which cost no less than 156,000*l.*, exclusive of the terraces, which cost 9,600*l.* The organ in the west gallery is divided to permit view of a large rose window. The frieze of the order, and the semi-cupola of the abais, are now being painted by M. Flandrin and M. Picot. The first will represent the entrance into Jerusalem, with procession; and the second, illustrations of the Seven Sacraments.

As a contrast to the present good feeling towards the English, it is curious to observe that a carved figure of St. Victoire, on the reredos of the altar, was defaced during the last revolution, because of its approximation to Victoria. The great west doors are of

cast-iron, made to look like bronze: the font, too, is of the same material.

As we are now close to the railway station, and ten minutes will whisk us to St. Denis, let us see what the Government architects have been doing at the cathedral there,—a building rich in historical connections, and full of interest as a monument. We may note, as we pass along, the exact resemblance in all respects of the French railroads and accompaniments to our own,—a circumstance which of course lessens the feeling of novelty experienced by the English visitor in the time of the lumbering diligence, noisy postillion, long straight paved roads between apple-trees, the ancient post-house, and the fortified towns through which he was tumbled. We may mourn too, as we leave the city, over the miserable folly which sank, in constructing a system of not merely useless but detrimental fortifications around Paris, an amount of money that, properly applied, would have conferred advantages on its citizens through all time to come.

The cathedral of St. Denis, the resting-place and cenotaph of French kings, has been badly treated by incompetent restorers, and is in some respects falsified and irretrievably injured as a monument of the art of a period. The late M. Debret was the architect, who, at a cost of seven millions of francs, achieved this destruction.

The principal, or what we should call the west, front was added to and altered without compunction: as, for example, he introduced an arcade to contain some miserable bas-reliefs of early kings. The sculpture in the magnificent portal is ruined by the new heads that have been put upon the figures. A spire was built upon the north tower, but was scarcely completed before the necessity of taking it down was made evident by the settlements in the tower below: its constituents now lumber the garden of the cathedral. One of the most extraordinary acts of the custodians of the church at this period was the treatment given to an interesting canopied monument to Dagobert, ascribed to the thirteenth century, which was actually cut in two longitudinally, and placed half on each side (to match), at the western entrance! The stained glass is, for the most part, very bad: the windows in the south transept, representing visits to the church by Napoleon and Louis Philippe, are miserable caricatures. Many of the chapels have polychrome decorations, with few claims to admiration.

M. Viollet Leduc, who succeeded M. Debret, appears to have a better idea of the duty of a restorer: the works that are going on in the eastern chapels* are of a satisfactory character: the forms of the painted decorations are somewhat staring, but are said to be authorised by the ancient remains. The aisles of the choir are painted very extensively: the columns are covered with foliage: the capitals are gilt: the vaults are blue powdered with stars; and the groins are picked in red and other colours. The glass, put in under the direction of M. Leduc, is by the late M. Gerente, and is of a superior character.

One of the great points of interest in St. Denis is the crypt, with its extraordinary series of royal effigies. M. Adolphe Lance, the Government inspector of the works there (and whose name is not unknown to our readers),

* Each of these chapels has two pictures.